

SEARED TUNA NICOISE-STYLE SALAD with Shallot-Caper Vinaigrette

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There is a great debate about what ingredients truly make up a Nicoise salad. Food historians state that its most basic 19th century version was made up of tomatoes, anchovies, and olive oil. Since that time, many versions have developed in various locations across France and the world. Today, it's common to find Nicoise salad containing potatoes and/or green beans, which to some is a sacrilege, while others would not consider serving it without them.

This version was inspired by salads I enjoyed in Paris many years back – at a sidewalk café, of course, paired with a lovely, crisp white wine. It is filled with delicious health and brain-boosting ingredients dressed with a light and flavorful vinaigrette. I love topping the salad with marinated and seared tuna filets in place of frequently used canned tuna to elevate the flavor and the dining experience. It's one of my all-time favorite meals!

Makes: 2 servings

INGREDIENTS

Shallot-Caper Vinaigrette

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/8 cup champagne or white balsamic vinegar
1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh shallots (or 1 tsp dried shallots)
1 1/2 teaspoon capers, drained
1 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon fresh tarragon (or 1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon)
pinch kosher salt
pinch ground black pepper

Salad

2 fresh tuna fillets
5 ounces mixed super greens (baby kale, chard, spinach)
10 cherry or grape tomatoes, sliced in half
1 cup sliced artichoke hearts (not marinated), drained, or thawed; moisture pressed out
1/4 cup pitted, sliced Niçoise or Kalamata olives
1/2 red or yellow bell pepper, thinly sliced
2 ounces steamed and cooled green beans
2 hard-cooked eggs, cut into wedges (eliminate for vegan)
1/2 avocado, sliced
1/4 cup slivered almonds

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the Vinaigrette

- Place all vinaigrette ingredients into a medium-sized mixing bowl or covered jar. Whisk or shake together until fully emulsified. Set aside.

Marinate the Tuna

- Place the tuna into a medium-sized bowl (or zip-lock bag) along with 1/3 cup of the vinaigrette. Gently turn the tuna fillets over to coat. Marinate for 15 - 30 minutes.

Assemble the Salads

- On each individual plate, create a base layer of the salad greens, then arrange the tomatoes, artichoke hearts, olives, bell pepper, beans, egg wedges, and avocado.
- Give the remaining vinaigrette another light whisk to combine ingredients. Drizzle a small amount of vinaigrette over the bowl ingredients.

Sear the Tuna

- Heat a large skillet to medium-high heat. Remove the tuna from the marinade and place into the preheated skillet. Discard the marinade. Sear the tuna for approximately 2 minutes per side. The tuna will be rare to medium-rare in the center.
- Transfer tuna to cutting board and let rest for 2 minutes. Slice tuna into 1/4-inch slices and place in a cascading or fan shape on the salad. Drizzle lightly with more of the vinaigrette.
- Garnish with the sliced almonds.

Serve immediately.

MAKE-AHEAD NOTES:

To prepare the salad ahead make these modifications:

- Do not add the vinaigrette. Store the vinaigrette separately and add it when ready to serve.
- Cool the tuna before refrigerating or adding to the salad.
- Store the salad in tightly sealed container in the refrigerator until ready to serve.
- The avocado can be added to the salad ahead but it may turn slightly brown. It is best to either slice and wrap it tightly then refrigerate it separately, or slice it just before serving.
- Store the almonds separately and add to the salad just before serving.